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UNCLAS AMMAN 003352

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SUBJECT: GOJ BACKTRACKING ON BOMB PLOT REINFORCES PUBLIC SKEPTICISM

REF: A. AMMAN 3288

[1](#)B. FBIS GMP20040430000022

[1](#)1. (U) The April 29 Zarqawi audiotape acknowledging sponsorship of the recent bomb plot in Amman but denying a chemical agent was involved got wide publicity in Jordan. It prompted the GOJ to walk back from previous claims that the bombers aimed to kill 80,000 Jordanians with chemical bombs (refs). GOJ spokesperson Asma Khader challenged Zarqawi's denial of a chemical bomb on Jordan TV April 30: "As for denying that chemical substances would have been used, this does not conform with the seizure of these huge quantities of chemicals and materials and does not conform with the confessions made by al-Jayyusi and other group members." In the next breath, however: "On the other hand, no Jordanian official has said that the chemical materials are a chemical bomb (sic). They are chemical materials that suspect al-Jayyusi admitted he bought on the Jordanian market."

[1](#)2. (U) Khader's comments contradict (state-run) JTV's narration during the special program airing the plotters' confessions on April 26. In that program, "technical experts" claimed that one conventional and one "chemical" bomb had been planned, with casualty estimates of "around 80,000 people dead and around 160,000 wounded."

[1](#)3. (U) Comment: While Zarqawi's acknowledgment of the plot to target GID supports the GOJ story that something horrible was afoot in Jordan, the public flip-flop on the chemical bomb angle will reinforce the widely-held view that the GOJ exaggerated the group's intentions and capabilities. Nor will it bolster the GOJ's credibility in the eyes of a conspiracy-minded public.

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